



CALIFORNIA NATIONAL GUARD

NEWS Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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September 12, 2005
Release # 09-11-05

Base Living Conditions Improve Tenfold After One Week

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – The living conditions at Belle Chasse Naval Air Station, La. are continually changing. What started out as just a few individuals occupying the area has grown into a small town, and several members of the armed forces have seen to it that the “small town” has everything it needs.

Some Soldiers and Airmen started out in cots under the stars in “pole barns,” which look like giant car ports on the tarmac runway. Others slept in an airplane hangar filled with supplies and luggage from incoming service members.

“When I first arrived here nothing was operational,” said Staff Sgt. Michael Adams, Telecommunications Specialist with the California Air National Guard’s 162nd Combat Communications Group from North Highlands. “There were small generators running everything. Now there are loud, gigantic generators providing electricity all over the base.”

“We have gone from primitive to high-tech very quickly,” said Command Sgt. Maj. Anthony Hines, Operations Sgt. Maj. of the California Joint Task Force (CJTF). “First, the area was given an evaluation of what it could withstand, and then the adjustment period began. I am impressed at the timeline of events that have brought this area to a fully functioning support element.”

Members of the supply team worked overtime to transform the base into a more hospitable environment. “There are 18-wheel trucks and airplanes dropping off supplies and amenities on a daily basis,” said Hines.

Cell phone usage was almost non-existent after Hurricane Katrina ravaged the base area, which made contacting family difficult. “Receiving cell phone signals during the first few days was a situation that had to be addressed quickly,” said Hines. Special thanks to service members for setting up local satellite and communication operations to allow Guard Members can speak to their loved ones back home. Even internet connections have been established.”

From running water and restrooms, to ice-cold sodas and air conditioning, the facilities here keep improving to make the relief effort more sustainable. “The standard of living here has gone way up,” said Adams. “And with local businesses and restaurants opening back up, we have more options and resources available to us. That is truly a blessing.”